

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the title as follows:

Drugs Screening Method for Active Ingredient Which Exhibits  
Effects of Ameliorating Itch, Pruritus, Rough Skin or  
Hypersensitive Sensitive Skin or Effects of Skin for Whitening via  
Inhibition of the by Inhibiting Production [[and]] and/or Release  
of Stem Cell Factor

Please amend the paragraph beginning at line 3 of page 2 as follows:

It is known that expression of SCF (also referred to as "kit ligand" (KL) or mast cell growth factor (MCF)) is accelerated in skin spot areas, etc., and that ultraviolet irradiation accelerates expression of SCF (L.H. Kligman et al., Photochem. Photobiol. Vol.63, No.2 (1996) pp.123-127). SCF is a protein produced by keratinocytes, fibroblasts, vascular endothelial cells and the like. The effects of SCF include effects of growth of undifferentiated hematopoietic stem cells, promoted differentiation of reproductive cells, promoted growth of mast cells and promoted growth of pigment cells (Bio Science

Terminology Library - Cytokines and Growth Factors, Yodosha Publications (1995), ed. by K. Miyazono and K. Sugamura). Two forms of SCF are known, the membrane-bound form (SCF-2) and the secreted form (SCF-1) which is liberated from the membrane after cleavage by proteases. SCF-2 binds to SCF receptors on pigment cells while bound to cornified or other types of cells, thereby activating growth of the pigment cells, whereas SCF-1 is cleaved at its cleavage site and liberated from the cell membrane and then binds to SCF receptors on pigment cells or mast cells, resulting in growth activation of pigment cells or growth activation and degranulation of mast cells (T. Kunisada et al., J. Exp. Med., Vol.187, No.10, (1998) pp.1565-1573). Abnormal production of SCF is linked with abnormal proliferation of pigment cells, which results in accelerated melanin production and is a cause of skin spots, freckles, darkened skin and the like. It is also associated with abnormal proliferation and abnormal degranulation of mast cells, resulting in accelerated release of chemical mediators such as histamine, serotonin and LTB4 (J. Grabbe et al., Arch. Dermatol. Res. ~~(1984)~~ (1994) 287:78-84), and constitutes a cause of pruritus, rough skin, sensitive skin and similar conditions.